

Excused Absence Policy

Policy and Procedure

Section 1. Purpose and Scope

On occasion, students may be absent from class or miss exams and assignments due to personal, family or medical reasons. Students are encouraged to make their own decisions regarding their health and ability to complete class requirements. As such, attending classes and completing course requirements rests with students who are encouraged to communicate directly with faculty. The decisions regarding the academic implications of the absence rest with the faculty member who is ultimately responsible for granting students excuses from class, exams or assignments. While campus partners are happy to work with faculty and staff in supporting students and understanding reasons for absences, federal regulations maintain that a student has a right to privacy. These federal regulations prohibit the disclosure of personal and health information of students and therefore, faculty and staff cannot mandate students to provide proof of medication conditions or disability.

Please Note: Students who are working either with Clark University Division of Student Success, on a Medical Leave of Absence, or with College Board, on a petition for special action or otherwise, may be requested to provide verification of medical conditions or disabilities. Also, for students with disabilities, the Students Accessibility Services will obtain appropriate documentation required for implementing accommodations and can serve as a resource for faculty with questions.

Section 2. Definitions

- Instructor Responsibilities include:
 - At the beginning of each course, it is highly encouraged that the instructor provide students in class a written copy of the policy specifying the role of

attendance in the instructor's method for evaluation of student achievement. Instructors may set their own standards for what constitutes an excused absence. The most important factor in the number of excused absences is the reasonable determination of what skills and performances are required for the class. For example, if class information is available through peer notes, textbooks, internet sources, etc., absences may not prevent students from adequately completing course assignments. In any event, faculty are responsible for setting attendance policy and should communicate these expectations to students clearly. Faculty have broad latitude to craft appropriate substitute makeup work. In some cases of extended absences, a course grade of Incomplete will be appropriate.

- *Procedures involving short-term absences:* If an instructor has academic concerns about student absences fewer than five consecutive days, the instructor should bring the matter before the Associate Dean for Student Academic Success for discussion and review. The Division of Student Success is available to work with students who have an emergency that will have short-term implications on the student's ability to attend classes or complete exams and/or assignments. In these cases, the Division of Student Success will work with the student to receive appropriate campus support, obtain supporting documentation, and communicate by email with faculty, when appropriate, the need for the student to miss course work or classes for a short period of time. Faculty are

encouraged to connect students who have an unexpected short term situation/emergency with the Division of Student Success.

- *Procedures involving longer-term or regular absences:* When appropriate, faculty may contact the Director of Student Accessibility Services regarding a student whom the faculty member has been informed is registered with the office. In matters of extended student absence, the Director of Student Accessibility Services is available to assist instructors where there is concern regarding the absence of a student. The office can be of greatest assistance when concerns are brought to their attention early in a semester. If the student is not registered with Student Accessibility Services, the faculty member should notify the Associate Dean for Student Inclusive Academic Excellence or the Division of Student Success to discuss next steps in following up with the student.
- Student responsibilities include:
 - Students who are unexpectedly absent from class should contact the instructor as soon as is reasonably possible. This contact may include in-person conversations, voicemail messages or email messages. When appropriate, students may inform the Division of Student Success of an unexpected extended absence and faculty will be notified of the need for the student to miss class to attend to the situation. In all cases, it is the student's responsibility to initiate contact with the faculty member or an appropriate administrator. Students who have concerns regarding the

faculty policy on attendance should communicate concerns directly with the faculty member or the department chair. At the beginning of the semester, students have the option of changing classes if there is a conflict with the attendance requirement/policy for a course.

Section 3. Procedures and Enforcement

- Medical Excuses:
 - Health Services and the Center for Counseling and Personal Growth (CPG) can provide a certificate of health stating that a student was seen at the service. Note that the certificate is NOT an excuse for missed classes. Excuses will not be issued by Health Services or CPG for course-related activities. Specifically, Health Services and CPG will not provide “medical excuses” for missed classes, missed examinations, or the late completion of assignments. It is encouraged that faculty and students should together resolve the dilemmas resulting from an illness or injury based on the student’s own explanation of the problem. Students may wish to share this information with instructors, but they are not required to do so. Students under the care of Health Services or CPG may request that the service communicate with the Division of Student Success (for short-term absences) or Student Accessibility Services (for longer-term or regular absences) on the student’s behalf. Such communication requires authorization for the disclosure of protected health information. Students should call Health Services or CPG to make an appointment to discuss their request and provide written authorization for release of medical

information. Subsequently, the Division of Student Success or Student Accessibility Services will then communicate with the student's instructors regarding information pertaining to the student's absence.

- **Absences Due to Religious Beliefs**

- Any student who is unable, due to their religious beliefs, to attend classes or to participate in any examination, study or work requirement on a particular day shall be excused from that activity. They will be given the opportunity to make up missed work with no adverse or prejudicial effects.

- **Absences Due to Administrative Process**

- In some cases, students will be absent from classes based on required participation in an administrative processes. These cases will be communicated through the Division of Student Success. While rare, they are expected to be honored with minimal disclosure of information.

- **Unexcused Absences**

- Faculty members are under no obligation to allow students to complete work missed from unexcused absences. Faculty may have attendance policies that result in penalties that harm course grades. Students who abuse the excused absence policy by consciously misrepresenting to the instructor the reason for the absence will be considered to have committed academic misconduct. Examples of abuse include falsifying an illness or family emergency, falsely claiming that attendance at the event is required, falsely claiming to have attended an event, or falsely claiming that an absence has been approved by university officials. If an instructor

determines that a student is guilty of an abuse, the instructor should treat it as they would any other instance of breach of academic integrity.

Related Information

Further information on leaves of absences and withdrawals can be found at

<https://www.clarku.edu/success/resources/absences-and-leaves/>.

History/Revision Information

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